

## Going through the Gospels – Bible Study Series

### The Parables of Jesus Christ (Article)

#### The Parables of Jesus Christ

1 Once again Jesus began to teach beside the sea, and such a large crowd gathered around Him that He got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people crowded along the shore.

2 And He taught them many things in parables, and in His teaching He said,  
3 “Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed.

4 And as he was sowing, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.

5 Some fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow.

6 But when the sun rose, the seedlings were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the seedlings, and they yielded no crop.

8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it sprouted, grew up, and produced a crop—one bearing thirtyfold, another sixtyfold, and another a hundredfold.”

9 Then Jesus said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” (Mark 4:1-9 BSB)

#### Introduction

As we learn more about Jesus Christ in the Gospel accounts (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), in addition to performing miracles, we also encounter Him teaching and preaching. While much of His teaching is found in the so-called ‘Sermon on the Mount’ (Matthew 5-7), He also taught by means of speaking in the above verse (Mark 4:1-9). The way He speaks here is commonly known as a *parable*. The following provides an overview of Jesus’ parables, answering questions, such as ‘What is a parable?'; ‘Are parables the same as allegories?'; ‘Why did He use parables?'; ‘How can we understand them?'; ‘Who are the main characters in a parable?'; ‘Do the parables have one single lesson, or more?'; ‘What are the main themes we find in them?'; ‘How have parables been interpreted in church history?'; ‘How

do the parables apply to your life, what can you learn from them and how can you put the lessons into practice?'; 'What are some practical tips to study Jesus' parables?'

These are some of the items we want to consider, while keeping in mind that the most important part of Jesus' ministry - then as it is now - is a call to repentance. This is the main truth we find in all of His teaching, including the parables, and is the difference of spending eternity separated from God (in hell) or spending eternity with Jesus (in heaven). This is a matter of the heart, and Jesus calls us all to Himself: "My sheep listen to My voice; I know them and they follow Me...no one can snatch them out of My hand." (John 10:27-28).

Note: All Scripture verses are from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB)

### What is a Parable?

What is a parable? A parable is basically a comparison. We can see this for instance in the parable of 'The Sower and the Soils' (Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23). Here the comparison is between those who reject Jesus and those who accept Him, by using an agricultural example. (1)

A parable can encompass a larger spectrum of meaning. As such, there are *terms* that are related to a parable and can be part of a parable. These are simile, metaphor and allegory.

A simile is a comparison of the things with the words "like," or "as." We can find a good example of this in Jesus' parable of 'The Yeast' (aka. Parable of 'The Leaven') (*italics mine*): "The kingdom of heaven is *like leaven*...until all was leavened." (Matthew 13:33). (2)

A metaphor, is also a comparison of two things, but unlike a simile, it does so more directly, without the words "like" or "as." An illustration of this can be seen in Jesus' using metaphorical language in His parable 'The Lesson of the Lamp,' when He says "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). (3)

An allegory is a more advanced form of metaphor (a narrative, story or detailed account) using symbols. So something stands for something else. (4) We can find an example in the New Testament in the writings of Paul (Galatians 4:21-5:1) where he adapts the Old Testament events (Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar) to describe how life under the law and new life in Christ differ - the former as a religion of bondage, the latter as a religion of freedom (5):

21 Tell me, you who want to be under the law, do you not understand what the law says?

22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman.

23 His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born through the promise.

24 These things serve as illustrations, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children into slavery: This is Hagar.

25 Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present-day Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children.

26 But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

27 For it is written:

“Rejoice, O barren woman,  
who bears no children;  
break forth and cry aloud,  
you who have never travailed;  
because more are the children of the desolate woman  
than of her who has a husband.”

28 Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

29 At that time, however, the son born by the flesh persecuted the son born by the Spirit. It is the same now.

30 But what does the Scripture say? “Expel the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.”

31 Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not be encumbered once more by a yoke of slavery.

(Galatians 4:21-5:1)

In the history of the church, Jesus’ parables were considered to be detailed allegories. (6) (Note: we are looking at some of these considerations of church history in part six of this article, exploring selected examples). However, we must understand that Jesus’ parables are not allegories, despite the fact that at times they contain allegorical parts. (7) The challenge and danger over time, has been to ‘over allegorize’ the parables of Jesus, i.e. this is the idea that every detail stands for something else, or a ‘hidden’ higher truth. That is certainly not the case.

Lastly, the parables of Jesus are always part of a larger context (which cannot be ignored). In the Gospels, Jesus is always talking to a person, or group of people (sometimes the Bible does not tell us who He is talking to), and also (though not often) He explains His parable (Matthew 13:3-8; 18-23; Mark 4:3-8, 14-20; Luke 8:5-8, 11-15). As we are investigating our Lord’s

parables further - in part five - we are following Bloomberg in his approach which affirms that while there is not an unlimited amount of points Jesus is making, there is more than just (exactly) one point (or theme) per parable. (8) As said, to avoid ‘over-allegorizing’ or reading things into Christ’s words, we do well to go about understanding His parables, with care, prayerfully, and being guided by the Holy Spirit: “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have told you.” (John 14:26).

### Why did Jesus use parables?

10 Then the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Why do You speak to the people in parables?”

11 He replied, “The knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.

12 Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

13 This is why I speak to them in parables:

‘Though seeing, they do not see;  
though hearing, they do not hear or understand.’

14 In them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled:  
‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding;  
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.

15 For this people’s heart has grown callous;  
they hardly hear with their ears,  
and they have closed their eyes.

Otherwise they might see with their eyes,  
hear with their ears,  
understand with their hearts,  
and turn, and I would heal them.’

(Matthew 13:10-15) - (see also in Mark 4:10-12; Luke 8:9-10, 10:23-24)

Why did Jesus use parables? While not in all of His communicating with others, Jesus does use parables in over one third of His teaching in the first three Gospels. (9) So, just as the disciples, we may ask why Jesus uses parables; more precisely - why in some instances He speaks *to people* in parables. As such, in Matthew 13:1-23, we find the Parable of the ‘The Sower and the Soils’ (v.1-9), Jesus revealing the purpose of His parables (v.11-17) and our Lord explaining the Parable of the Sower (v.18-23). Let us take a closer look at how this all fits together and what Christ is doing here:

‘The Parable of the Sower and the Soils’

1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea.  
2 Such large crowds gathered around Him that He got into a boat and sat down, while all the people stood on the shore.  
3 And He told them many things in parables, saying, “A farmer went out to sow his seed.  
4 And as he was sowing, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.  
5 Some fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow.  
6 But when the sun rose, the seedlings were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.  
7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the seedlings.  
8 Still other seed fell on good soil and produced a crop—a hundredfold, sixtyfold, or thirtyfold.  
9 He who has ears, let him hear.”  
(Matthew 13:1-9)

Jesus is speaking here to a crowd at the Sea of Galilee, so large, that He has to get into a boat to teach the masses of people standing on the shore. For anyone hearing the parable for the first time that Jesus uses here, namely ‘The Parable of the Sower and the Soils’ (which also appears in Mark 4:3-9), it may not be immediately apparent that this is a parable about parables. (10) The emphasis here is on the different kinds of soils and the kind (if any) crop they produce. It is only the latter soil that produces lasting crops. When Jesus says, “He who has ears, let him hear,” (v.9) this is a warning to understand and heed His words, and also indicates the need for carefully interpreting this parable. (11)

### The purpose of Jesus’ parable(s)

This brings us to the purpose of Jesus’ parable(s). Jesus, of course, knows that further explanation is needed, and so it is no surprise that His disciples ask Him, *why* He speaks to the people in parables.

11 He replied, “The knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.  
12 Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.  
(Matthew 13:11-12)

As Jesus responds to His disciples (v.11-12), we realize that our Lord is revealing truths about God’s kingdom, that is those who receive God’s Word with a repentant, humbled obedient heart, will receive and understand more

(v.12), and the unrepentant, that is unbelievers here, will lose understanding, because of their unbelief and hardened heart. (12) This leads us to v.13, where Jesus says: “This is why I speak to them in parables: ‘Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.’” (Matthew 13:13).

Here, Jesus applies his response to people, who are not His disciples, that is unbelievers. (13) There is here a sense of spiritual blindness or dullness, which we can find in the Old Testament, e.g. Deuteronomy 29:4; Isaiah 42:20; Jeremiah 5:21 and Ezekiel 12:2. As such, in our Lord’s application, we realize there is a continuation of people, who - for whatever reason - will not turn to God (Christ). This is a stern warning and sober reality for us all.

What follows, is Christ formally quoting the Old Testament prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 6:9-10) in Matthew 13:14-15.

14 In them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled:  
‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding;  
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.  
15 For this people’s heart has grown callous;  
they hardly hear with their ears,  
and they have closed their eyes.  
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,  
hear with their ears,  
understand with their hearts,  
and turn, and I would heal them.’  
(Matthew 13:14-15)

This is the first explicitly fulfilled prophecy in Matthew’s Gospel that seems to deal with some people in Jesus’ audience, rather than our Lord Himself. (14) There is judgment on those who will not turn to God, away from idols, or away from anything else standing between unbelieving people and Jesus Christ. By contrast, Jesus reveals His blessing upon His disciples, since they do properly receive and respond to His Words (v.16), just as godly people in the Old Testament desired (v.17). (15)

10 As soon as Jesus was alone with the Twelve and those around Him, they asked Him about the parable.

11 He replied, “The mystery of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to those on the outside everything is expressed in parables,  
12 so that, ‘they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven.’”  
(Mark 4:10-12)

Furthermore, if we consider the parallel account in Mark 4:10-12, where Jesus reveals the reason for speaking in parables, we can learn more about the purpose for doing so. First, when Jesus talks about “the mystery of the kingdom of God,” and about those “on the outside,” (v.11) He is concealing His teachings from people who are hostile toward him. At the time, those included many, such as the Sadducees, the Pharisees and even the Romans with Pilate as governor, who viewed Jesus as a threat to their earthly authority. Second, the parables are good illustrations of Jesus’ message of the kingdom of God, revealing what is in the hearts of people (good or evil), which even caused those on the “outside” to react to these illustrations with evil intentions (see Mark 12:12). Third, Jesus used parables to debilitate those hearing His words. A good example of this can be found in Jesus’ encounter with Simon, the Pharisee (Luke 7:36-50) where the parable Jesus uses reveals the hardness of this person’s heart. (16)

Jesus explains His parable (Matthew 13:18-23; also found in Mark 4:13-20; Luke 8:11-15)

18 Consider, then, the parable of the sower:

19 When anyone hears the message of the kingdom but does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.

20 The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and at once receives it with joy.

21 But since he has no root, he remains for only a season. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.

22 The seed sown among the thorns is the one who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

23 But the seed sown on good soil is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and produces a crop—a hundredfold, sixtyfold, or thirtyfold.”

(Matthew 13:18-23)

This brings us to Jesus providing the explanation of ‘The Parable of the Sower and the Soils.’ We find this explanation in Matthew, Mark and Luke. The seed is God’s Word (Luke 8:11). Satan, the devil, is the one who takes away this seed away from people’s hearts, keeping them in unbelief and away from eternal salvation (Luke 8:12). The second ‘soil’ on which the seed falls, are people who have no root, and fall away quickly when “trouble or persecution comes because of the word,” (Matthew 13:20-21), i.e. there has been no true transformation of their lives. (17) The third ‘soil’ is unproductive, due to the worries of this life, and “the deceitfulness of wealth” (Matthew 13:22). Unlike the previous three, it is only the last

example, that of the ‘good soil’ on which the seed falls, that is productive (Matthew 13:23). These are people who are open and receptive to God’s Word, soft-hearted, with Jesus’ truth producing a life bent towards God. (18)

### Summary: Why did Jesus use Parables?

To sum up the foregoing, we realize how gracious, merciful and loving our Lord Jesus Christ is, in that He not only guides us to understand His Word, in helping us grasp why He uses Parables, but also calls us to respond with open hearts.

As seen in ‘The Parable of the Sower and the Soils’ Jesus issues a stern warning to all people to listen and understand Him (v.9). Consistent with the entire Bible, there will be ‘outsiders,’ that is people who will not repent of their sins, turn to Jesus, follow Him as disciples and surrender to His teachings on “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 13:11). (19)

Also in revealing the purpose of His parables, our Lord shows us that, even though there are fewer parables in the Old Testament - He uses them in a way and to a degree unparalleled before and after His time. (20) These are His words, and they are unique in purpose and scope. As Jesus reveals, His parables, after making their points, either attract or keep away its listeners. The former are convicted and repent, while the latter may even grow in their hostility to Him (Mark 12:12). There is no middle ground for a listener. (21)

Finally, as we consider the explanation of the above parable, we should note that everything in His interpretation of the parable is fully consistent with His teachings. (22) Jesus’ parables and teachings are authentic, as is every word He speaks. As ‘God in the Flesh,’ Christ shows us here - in His words - His absolute authority. (23) While this may sound like a harsh reality - which it is - we realize that Jesus came not only to teach, but also to pronounce judgment (on people who will not surrender and repent). (24)

The bottom line is that, as He interprets His parable and explains why He uses parables, He is pointing to spiritual truth and realities: Responding (or not responding) to Him is a matter of the heart. So, as we consider 40 parables of Jesus here, all of us have to ask ourselves, prayerfully, ‘What does this tell me about God’s Kingdom?’ and ‘How does it apply to my life?’ (25) which we will look at with some practical tips, in part eight. This brings us to the question of how we can understand the parables.

### How can we understand the parables?

1 Then the LORD sent Nathan to David, and when he arrived, he said, “There were two men in a certain city, one rich and the other poor.

2 The rich man had a great number of sheep and cattle,

3 but the poor man had nothing except one small ewe lamb that he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food and drank from his cup; it slept in his arms and was like a daughter to him.

4 Now a traveler came to the rich man, who refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the poor man’s lamb and prepared it for his guest.”

5 David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan: “As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die!

6 Because he has done this thing and has shown no pity, he must pay for the lamb four times over.”

7 Then Nathan said to David, “You are that man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul.

8 I gave your master’s house to you and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah, and if that was not enough, I would have given you even more.

9 Why then have you despised the command of the LORD by doing evil in His sight? You put Uriah the Hittite to the sword and took his wife as your own, for you have slain him with the sword of the Ammonites.

10 Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.’

(2 Samuel 12:1-10)

In this section we are addressing the challenge of how we can understand the parables Jesus uses. Who are the main characters in a parable? Do the parables have a single lesson, or more?

To understand a parable, we need to identify who the main character(s) are. The above segment, recounts a parable the prophet Nathan speaks to King David, after having committed adultery with another man’s wife (Bathsheba) and the subsequent murder of her husband Uriah, as the king tries to cover up his affair (having gotten Bathsheba pregnant). This is a decisive turning point in David’s life, and even though he does repent, following Nathan’s confrontation, disaster follows disaster in the king’s life. While the results of his sin remain, upon repenting, God does forgive and restore David, which underscores God’s grace and eternal promise of loving-kindness to him. (26)

This background helps us understand Nathan's parable better. One of the main characters in the parable, thus, is the rich man (David) who acted in treachery and without compassion. His taking of the poor man's lamb, represents his act of adultery with Bathsheba (the lamb) and the poor man stands for her husband, Uriah, the Hittite. Note, that these events are the basis for Psalm 51, a Psalm of David. As such, the parable - a 'Judicial Parable' - is designed, so that David passes judgment on himself, which he does (v.5-6). (27) In this example, we see how an Old Testament parable uses a story with familiar human characters to reveal truth, previously undisclosed. (28)

This brings us back to the parables of Jesus. In Matthew 13:1-52 we find a set of eight parables of our Lord, of which most are very similar in form to the aforementioned Old Testament parable. (29) Thus, there can be one or more main characters in a parable, which stand for someone or something, pointing to a spiritual reality. On this note, in the parable of 'The Lost Son,' (Luke 15:11-32), the Father represents God (Jesus Christ), the younger son represents sinners who need to repent, and the older son represents many of the Pharisees, who are envious and unrepentant. (30)

Let us now look at the other question, that is: Do the parables have a single lesson or more? For a long time it has been held that a parable of Jesus had exactly one single lesson. The reason for this is that in church history, the parables have been interpreted allegorically, which means that, supposedly, every single detail in them has a specific meaning. However, at this time, many hold that there can be more than one single lesson, and not every detail has to stand for something. That way, it is possible not to 'over-allegorize' a parable. As an example, in the parable of the 'Lost Son,' one theme is the lesson of God's grace of forgiveness towards repentant sinners, in line with Jesus' ministry of gracious mercy to 'the lost.' At the same time, there is a subtheme in the parable, represented by the older son, which is the refusal of the religious rulers of the time (many Pharisees) to welcome sinners, the way our Lord does. (31)

In summary, wherever parables are the subject, it is primarily the parables of Jesus Christ that come to mind. (32) As we had seen in the Old Testament example of a parable Nathan uses to confront King David, there are usually more than one (main) character(s) in a parable. Likewise, as seen in Jesus' parables there can be more than (exactly) one single lesson. Keeping this in mind, we have a basic foundation, as to how we can approach and understand the parables. We will expand upon this further in the next section, that deals with the main themes in our Lord's parables.

## What are the Main Themes in the Parables?

Having considered how we can understand the parables main character and lesson(s) they contain - we now turn to how we can approach

the main theme(s) found in the parables. Here, we want to consider a model that is, not only Bible-based and Christ-centred, i.e. does not challenge the truth of Scripture in any way (each and every word in the Gospels, Jesus speaks is His words, that is, they are all authentic, including His parables), but is also helpful as a tool to better understand the parables along with everything else our Lord did and taught.

The basic premise is that in each of His parables Jesus makes one main point for every main character. (33) Following this approach for the three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) - the fourth, the Gospel of John does not include any parables - Jesus structured them in three different ways. First, most of His parables are structured in a triangular way which means, there are three main characters (or groups of characters) and a relationship of some kind between them. Here, there is a main figure of authority (a king, a father, farmer, shepherd, etc.) relating to two or more unlike (Luke 15:11-32) subordinate pairs (sons, tenants, good and bad servants, etc.) The 'Prodigal Son' comes to mind (with two sons and their father), as does the 'Parable of the Talents (Minas)' (Matthew 25:14-30) (with a master, two faithful servants, and one wicked servant). (34)

These triangular (triadic) parables can be divided into single three-point and complex three-point parables. The latter differs from the former in that more than three characters appear, but the structure is similar to the simple three-point parables. Two-point and one-point parables have less main characters, and accordingly there are only two (or one) instead of three main points. (35) For a basic overview of these kinds of parables, see Chart B. As to how the main characters of these kinds of parables relate their main points and reveal their themes, see Chart C. (36)

Given the aforementioned approach, we find that there are many different themes in the parables (see Chart C). Jesus' parables cover a range of themes, such as those relating to the kingdom of God ('Kingdom of heaven'), God's character - primarily God's grace, God's work and God's plan of salvation (37) - manifested in the call to repentance by our Lord Jesus Christ, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." (Matthew 4:17). This theme - the gospel of the kingdom of God (not to be confused with the literary term, the Gospels) - is the same that is used by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1-2), and then by Jesus announcing the breakthrough of God's Kingdom. (38)

As we had seen in the Old Testament example of a 'judicial parable' which Nathan uses in confronting King David, rabbinic parables, in general describe the Mosaic Law. By contrast, while not apocalyptic, Jesus' parables are foremost thematically eschatological, relating to the final judgement. (39)

As it stands, the parables Jesus uses are essential to His entire ministry. They are used to point back to Himself, that is His Messianic mission. The themes we find in the parables cannot be separated from Christ and His uncompromising call to respond to Himself and the kingdom of God. (40)

## How have the Parables been interpreted in Church History?

In this section we are considering how the parables have been interpreted throughout church history. The goal is to give an understanding of other ways our Lord's parables have been interpreted.

The interpretation of the parables throughout church history is closely connected to the way the Bible itself has been interpreted. As such, we are only considering here the most notable developments: we are looking at the Early Church Period - "The Patristic Period" (ca. AD 100-590), the Middle Ages (ca. AD 590-1500), and the Reformation (ca. AD 1500-1650) which also had many subdivisions in time. (41)

Christian interpretation of the Bible in the Early Church attempted to find a spiritual, or 'hidden' deeper meaning behind the biblical text. It is here, that Origen (ca. AD 185-254) under the influence of ancient Greek philosopher Plato, formulated three possible meanings (or 'senses') of a text: that is a literal, moral and spiritual sense (allegory being part of the spiritual sense). (42) Attributed to John Cassian (ca. AD 360-435) is his division of Origen's spiritual meaning into the allegorical and the anagogical sense, thereby creating a forth level of interpretation. (43)

Then, in the Middle Ages, there are different developments of interpretation, often undertaken by Medieval monks who placed emphasis on the allegorical approach. Every biblical passage was thought to contain four meanings, or four senses, that is a literal (or historical) sense, an allegorical (or doctrinal) sense, a moral (or tropological) sense and anagogical (or eschatological) sense. To illustrate this, we may think about the Israelites crossing of the Red Sea as:

Literal: the genuine event of the crossing of the Israelites led by Moses

Allegorical: the baptism and new life of believers in Christ.

Moral: obedient believers crossing from the challenges of life to earthly blessings.

Anagogical: the final crossing of believers from death to life eternal.

(44)

Moving into the Reformation period, while not always straightforward, the fourfold sense of interpreting the Bible continued. (45) However, while an allegorical element of interpreting Scripture remained, there was a shift to placing an emphasis on the 'literal sense.' Coupled with this shift, is the challenge to interpretative authority.

It is here that Martin Luther and the other Reformers read Scripture in accordance with itself as having divine authority, breaking with previous church tradition and clashing with Roman Catholicism. (46) Hereby, Luther underscored the literal (historical) meaning of the Bible, placing it above the allegorical meaning. The original historical context of a biblical passage

provides the best interpretation of Scripture, based on the principle of Scripture alone (*Sola Scriptura*). (47)

Based on the foregoing considerations of how the Bible was interpreted throughout church history, at specific times, here are some examples (48) of how the parables were interpreted using the Parable of The Good Samaritan (49):

The first example from the early church of interpreting a parable comes from Clement of Alexandria (ca. AD 150 - ca. 215):

Good Samaritan = Neighbor = Christ  
Thieves = Rulers of darkness  
Wounds = Fears, lusts, wraths, pains, deceits, pleasures  
Wine = Blood of David's vine  
Oil = Compassion of the Father  
Binding [of health and of salvation] = Love, faith, hope

The second example is Origen (ca. AD 184 - ca. 254):

The man going down to Jericho = Adam  
Jerusalem from which he was going = Paradise  
Jericho = The word  
Robbers = Hostile influences and enemies of man such as the thieves and murderers mentioned in John 10:8  
Wounds = Disobedience or sins  
Priest = Law  
Levite = Prophets  
Good Samaritan = Christ  
Beast = Body of Christ  
Inn = Church  
Two denarii = Knowledge of the Father and the Son  
Innkeeper = Angels in charge of the church  
Return of the Good Samaritan = Second coming of Christ

The third example is Augustine (ca. AD 354-430):

The man going down to Jericho = Adam  
Jerusalem from which he was going = City of Heavenly Peace  
Jericho = The moon which signifies our mortality (there is a play here on the Hebrew terms for moon and Jericho)  
Robbers = Devil and his angels  
Stripping him = Taking away his immortality

Beating him = Persuading him to sin  
Leaving him half dead = Due to sin, he was dead spiritually, but half alive, due to his knowledge of God  
Priest = Priesthood of the Old Testament (Law)  
Levite = Ministry of the Old Testament (Prophets)  
Good Samaritan = Christ  
Binding of the wounds = Restraint of sin  
Oil = Comfort of good hope  
Wine = Exhortation to spirited work  
Beast = Body of Christ  
Inn = Church  
Two denarii = Two commandments of love  
Innkeeper = Apostle Paul  
Return of the Good Samaritan = Resurrection of Christ

The fourth is an example from the Middle Ages (AD 590-1500) by Bede (673-735):

The man going down to Jericho = Adam  
Jerusalem from which he is going = City of Heavenly Peace  
Jericho = Moon which signifies variation and change  
Robbers = Devil and his angels  
Stripping him = Stripping Adam of his glorious vestment of immortality and innocence  
Wounds = Sins  
Priest = Priesthood of the Old Testament  
Levite = Ministry of the Old Testament  
Samaritan = Christ  
Oil = Repentance  
Beast = The flesh in which the Lord came to us, i.e., the incarnation

The fifth and last is an example from the Reformation period (ca. AD 1500-1650) by Martin Luther (1483-1546):

The man going down to Jericho = Adam and all mankind  
Robbers = Devils who robbed and wounded us  
Priest = Fathers (Noah, Abraham) before Moses  
Levite = Priesthood of the Old Testament  
Good Samaritan = Lord Jesus Christ  
Oil/Wine = Whole Gospel from beginning to end  
Oil = Grace  
Wine = Cross Christian called to bear

Beast = Christ the Lord  
Inn - Christianity in world (church)  
Innkeeper = Preacher of the Word of God

In sum, the foregoing considerations in interpreting the Good Samaritan show different levels of the use of allegory. As witnessed in Clement there is a strong tendency to allegorize, continuing in Origen who uses the threefold sense of interpretation, i.e. literal, moral (tropological) and spiritual sense. Allegorizing finds its climax, and becomes the dominant method of interpretation in the Early Church Period, seen in Augustine. Looking at Bede's interpretation of the parable, we move from a threefold to a fourfold sense of Scripture, i.e. literal, moral, allegorical (using a different name, than previously, which was spiritual) and anagogical (that is eschatological) meaning. Like many others in this period, Bede relies on the interpretations of the early church fathers, which is the reason for the similarity to Augustine. With Luther then, in the Reformation period, there is a shift away from the fourfold method to a literal (or single-meaning) approach. However, we do see the allegorical interpretation, in his exegesis of the Good Samaritan, over-emphasizing the doctrine of justification in faith. Other than John Calvin, there was no one as consistent as him in his exegetical work, since he refused an allegorical and Christological approach to this parable. Only until recently, do we find a more nuanced allegorical approach, such as the one used by Bloomberg, who does not try to find meaning in every single detail of a parable. (50)

### How do the Parables Apply to Your Life?

27 "My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me.  
28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them out of My hand.  
29 My Father who has given them to Me is greater than all. No one can snatch them out of My Father's hand."  
(John 10:27-29)

In this part we want to think about how Jesus' parables apply to our lives as Christians. What can we learn from them? How can we put the lessons into practice?

As we tackle those questions, we need to remind ourselves that our Lord knows us better than we do ourselves. The above verses help us to realize that it is only in and through Jesus Christ that we can "hear" His voice as His "sheep." What that means is that any understanding of His parables, learning from them and putting them into practice, depends on Christ, not us. In other words, it is a humble, repentant, surrendered and obedient heart that Jesus is looking for, so that He can work in and through us. As believers we depend fully on Him, and listening to His voice is not only the best way to

go, but it also calls us to spend as much time as possible *in* His word (the Bible). Jesus has given us His Word and He *is* the Word (John 1:1-5).

With this in mind, and, taking into account the earlier parts ('Why did Jesus use Parables?' In part three; 'How can we understand the Parables?' in part four; and 'What are the main themes in the parables?' in part five) we have a solid starting point for applying them. Here, Charts A, B and C can be used to get a basic overview of the characters, lessons and themes in Jesus' parables.

Following the aforementioned approach (in part five) - considering the 'Parable of the Sower and the Soils' again here (as rendered in Mark 4:1-9; 13-20) Jesus is teaching several practical lessons simultaneously: Christ represents the Sower; providing the message of God's Kingdom, and if (and how) the seed develops is a matter of the heart of the listener, and only those people receptive to His voice and message will produce a harvest. This requires spiritual discernment. (51)

Having revealed the purpose of His parables (Mark 4:10-12), Jesus then moves ahead to interpret the parable (Mark 4:13-20). It is here that we can discern a valuable practical application for us as Christians and especially, in our relationships to others, such as unbelievers, for example. So, the first seed that never takes root represents people who will reject Jesus' call to repentance as soon as they hear it. This is a harsh truth, and yet, it is crucial that believers understand this, so as to be discerning in terms of spiritual warfare and the influence Satan has to deceive people. (52)

The second kind of seed, reveals those who have not been transformed in Christ's likeness. When trials and persecution arise, because of Jesus, there will be people who fall away. In v.18-19 we learn about people who become distracted "by the worries of this life" and "the deceitfulness of wealth." This third group can be seen as representative of those who place their hopes in a false sense of security ("wealth") and those who succumb to the worldly concerns ("worries of this life").

It is only the last group of people who are not hardened, shallow or distracted, that is those who are open and receptive to Jesus' message of God's kingdom. These produce an unspecified fruit, yet what matters is that they *are* producing fruit, i.e. building God's kingdom. (53) The lesson(s) here are a call to follow Christ, trust Him through trials of hardship and persecution, avoid people who claim they are Christians (but whose actions speak a different truth - see Luke 7:43-45), and lastly to avoid any form of idolatry (wealth, power, influence, objects) as they listen to and follow Jesus' voice. (54)

### Some Tips on Interpreting Jesus' Parables

As we conclude this article, and hope you will benefit from it, we turn to some final thoughts on how to interpret Jesus' parables. Important here is that, as seen, the parables are not allegories, and it is unwise to try to

uncover hidden meaning behind every single detail. Some parables have one main point, others have more than one point. (55) In addition to this, we, as believers have to accept and embrace the truth that Jesus' parables are designed to both conceal and reveal. In other words, there are those who are unwilling to follow Jesus, and will reject Him, along with the eternal consequences that follow. (56) This matters, since as we witness to the world as Christians (be it in evangelism, ministry or any other form of serving the Lord) we cannot change this biblical truth and spiritual reality. With that in mind, let us look at some tips on how to interpret the parables of Jesus Christ.

### Steps to Interpret the Parables

1. Start with prayer. Ask Jesus to help you in the process of interpreting His word, and let the Holy Spirit guide you along the way. (Philippians 4:6-7; Romans 8:26-27)
2. Make sure you have a sound Bible translation (NASB, ESV, NKJV, BSB or paraphrase: NLT).
3. Read the selected parable several times, and write down some notes and ideas.
4. Be aware of the socio-cultural and historical context of the parable. For instance, in the 'Parable of the Persistent Widow' ('Unjust Judge') (Luke 18:1-8) it is helpful to understand that widows in Jesus' time were often vulnerable to hardship and oppression.
5. Try to find out how many points a parable is making. There may be a connection here to the number of major characters in the parable (see Chart C).
6. Who is Jesus talking to? The identity of His listeners (the crowds, the disciples, the Jewish leaders, etc.) can help reveal the intended message.
7. The pattern of repetition in parables is used to emphasize a main point. So pay attention to this pattern.
8. Determine if there is symbolism common to the Old Testament in the parable: for instance, God is often depicted as a king, judge, father, shepherd, etc.
9. Be aware of how the parable ends. The parable's significance is often found in the last deed, action, saying, or person mentioned.
10. Consult Bible-based, Christ-centered commentaries and sources only *after* you have gone through the previous steps. (57)

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## Jesus' Parables (Charts)

<b>CHART A</b>
<b>PARABLES OF JESUS</b>

PARABLE	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE
The Lesson of the Lamp	5:14-15	<b>4:21-22</b>	8:16; 11:33
The House on the Rock (Wise and Foolish Builders)	<b>7:24-27</b>		6:47-49
The Patches	9:16	2:21	<b>5:36</b>
The Wine and the Wineskins	9:17	2:22	<b>5:37-38</b>
The Sower and the Soils	<b>13:3-8, 18-23</b>	4:3-8, 14-20	8:5-8, 11-15
The Wheat and the Weeds	<b>13:24-30, 36-43</b>		
The Mustard Seed	<b>13:31-32</b>	4:30-32	13:18-19
The Yeast	<b>13:33</b>		13:20-21
The Hidden Treasure	<b>13:44</b>		
The Valuable Pearl	<b>13:45-46</b>		
The Net	<b>13:47-50</b>		
The Homeowner	<b>13:52</b>		
The Lost Sheep	18:12-14		<b>15:3-7</b>
The Unforgiving Servant	<b>18:23-35</b>		
The Vineyard Workers	<b>20:1-16</b>		
The Two Sons	<b>21:28-32</b>		
The Wicked Tenants	<b>21:33-44</b>	12:1-11	20:9-18
The Wedding Banquet	<b>22:2-14</b>		
The Lessons of the Fig Tree	<b>24:32-35</b>	13:28-29	21:29-31
The Faithful and Wise Servant	<b>24:45-51</b>		12:42-48
The Ten Virgins	<b>25:1-13</b>		
The Talents (Minas)	<b>25:14-30</b>		19:12-27
The Sheep and the Goats	<b>25:31-46</b>		
The Seed Growing Secretly		<b>4:26-29</b>	
The Watchful		<b>13:35-37</b>	12:35-40

Servants			
The Money Lender			<b>7:41-43</b>
The Good Samaritan			<b>10:30-37</b>
The Friend at Midnight			<b>11:5-8</b>
The Rich Fool			<b>12:16-21</b>
The Unfruitful Fig Tree			<b>13:6-9</b>
The Guests at the Feast			<b>14:7-14</b>
The Great Banquet			<b>14:16-24</b>
The Cost of Discipleship			<b>14:28-33</b>
The Lost Coin			<b>15:8-10</b>
The Lost Son			<b>15:11-32</b>
The Shrewd Manager ('Unjust Steward')			<b>16:1-8</b>
The Rich Man and Lazarus			<b>16:19-31</b>
The Unworthy Servant			<b>17:7-10</b>
The Persistent Widow ('Unjust Judge')			<b>18:2-8</b>
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector			<b>18:10-14</b>

CHART B		
PARABLES OF JESUS		
	TITLE	BIBLE VERSE(S)
SIMPLE THREE POINT		
	The Lost Son	Luke 15:11-32
	The Lost Sheep/The Lost Coin	Luke 15:4-7/Luke 15:8-10
	The Money Lender	Luke 7:41-43
	The Two Sons	Matthew 21:28-32
	The Faithful and Wise Servant	Matthew 24:45-51
	The Ten Virgins	Matthew 25:1-13
	The Wheat and the Weeds	Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43
	The Net	Matthew 13:47-50
	The Rich Man and Lazarus	Luke 16:19-31
	The Watchful Servants	Mark 13:35-37
COMPLEX THREE POINT		
	The Talents (Minas)	Matthew 25:14-30
	The Vineyard Workers	Matthew 20:1-16
	The Sower and the Soils	Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23; <i>Mark 4:3-9, 13-20</i>
	The Good Samaritan	Luke 10:30-37
	The Great Banquet	Luke 14:16-24
	The Unforgiving Servant	Matthew 18:23-34
	The Shrewd Manager ('Unjust Steward')	Luke 16:1-8
	The Wicked Tenants	Matthew 21:33-44 <i>Mark 12:1-11</i>
	The Wedding Banquet	Matthew 22:2-14
	The Guests at the Feast	Luke 14:7-14
TWO POINT		
	The Pharisee and the Tax Collector	Luke 18:10-14
	The Home on the Rock (Wise and Foolish Builders)	Matthew 7:24-27
	The Unworthy Servant	Luke 17:7-10
	The Seed Growing Secretly	Mark 4:26-29

	The Rich Fool	Luke 12:16-21
	The Unfruitful Fig Tree	Luke 13:6-9
	The Persistent Widow ('Unjust Judge')	Luke 18:2-8
	The Friend at Midnight	Luke 11:5-8
ONE POINT		
	The Hidden Treasure/The Valuable Pearl	Matthew 13:44/Matthew 13:45-46
	The Cost of Discipleship	Luke 14:28-33
	The Mustard Seed/The Yeast	Matthew 13:31-32/Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:18-21
OTHER		
	The Sheep and the Goats	Matthew 25:31-46
	The Homeowner	Matthew 13:52
ADDITIONAL PARABLES		
	The Patches	Luke 5:36
	The Wine and the Wineskins	Luke 5:37-39
	The Lesson of the Lamp	Mark 4:21-22
	The Lesson of the Fig Tree	Matthew 24:32-35

CHART C - (Page 1)			
PARABLES OF JESUS			
TITLE	MAIN CHARACTERS	MAIN POINTS	THEMES
The Lost Son	Father, Prodigal Son, Older Brother	<p>1 - Like Prodigal, all sinners are called to God.</p> <p>2 - God offers forgiveness to all people.</p> <p>3 - Unlike the older brother, believers should always rejoice (and not begrudge) at God's grace toward the repentant.</p>	Repentance; forgiveness, grace.
The Lost Sheep/The Lost Coin	Shepherd, lost sheep, 99 sheep/woman, lost coin, 9 coins	<p>1 - Like the shepherd and woman, God goes to great lengths to save lost sinners.</p> <p>2 - Finding the lost causes great joy in heaven.</p> <p>3 - Just as the security of the 99 sheep and 9 coins is not an excuse to search for that which is lost, so Christians should never be content, not to reach out to the lost.</p>	God seeks and saves lost sinners; salvation causes heaven to rejoice; Believers are always called to minister to the lost continually.
The Money Lender	Money lender, debtor forgiven more, debtor forgiven less.	<p>1 - Like man forgiven less, we are not to take our spiritual forgiveness for granted.</p> <p>2 - Like man forgiven more, we are to be grateful for Jesus' love and forgiveness towards us.</p>	God's grace; love; forgiveness; gratitude; God does not play favourites.

		3 - Like the money lender, God forgives sinners of both groups, so they can start over with a fresh slate.	
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**CHART C - (Page 2)**

**PARABLES OF JESUS**

TITLE	MAIN CHARACTER	MAIN POINTS	THEME
The Two Sons	Father, son who refused but went, son who promised but didn't go.	<p>1 - God commands us all to do his will, like the father calling his sons to work.</p> <p>2 - While some promise obedience, but do not carry it out, these are like the son who disobeyed in the end.</p> <p>3 - While some are initially rebellious, they later obey and do God's will, like the son who obeyed in the end.</p>	God's call; genuine repentance; obedience; disobedience; 'nominal' Christians do not do God's will; 'true' Christians, often reluctantly do God's will.
The Faithful and Wise Servant	Master, faithful servant, unfaithful servant	<p>1 - At final judgment, God honors and punishes individuals, based on how they handled their God-given assignments.</p> <p>2 - Since the final judgment could come anytime, being faithful to do God's work, demands perseverance.</p> <p>3 - For those who delay</p>	Faith, faithfulness, faithlessness, believers, unbelievers.

		their God-given work, in order to do evil, may realize it is too late for them to make good for their wrongs.	
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**CHART C - (Page 3)**

**PARABLES OF JESUS**

TITLE	MAIN CHARACTER	MAIN POINTS	THEME
The Ten Virgins	Bridegroom, wise young women, foolish young women	<p>1 - Jesus' Second Coming may be longer than expected, like the coming of the bridegroom.</p> <p>2 - Like the wise young women, believers may encounter a longer delay than expected, which may be more difficult for a new Christian.</p> <p>3 - Like the foolish young women, a person who is unprepared for Jesus' return will have no second chance when the end comes.</p>	Jesus' Second Coming; repentance; failure to repent; being prepared; remaining watchful; reverence for God; heaven and hell.
The Wheat and the Weeds	Farmer, wheat, weeds	1 - God allows the righteous (wheat) and unrighteous (weeds) in the world to live side by side (often, hard to tell who is who) until the Second Coming of	Judgment Day; believers; unbelievers; Satan's work; heaven; hell; righteousness;

		<p>Christ.</p> <p>2 - When Christ returns the unrighteous will be sorted out, face judgment and go to hell.</p> <p>3 - Upon Christ's return the righteous will be grouped together, receive reward and welcomed into God's presence in heaven.</p>	unrighteousness; evil; eternal life; God's sovereignty.
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CHART - C (Page 4)			
PARABLES OF JESUS			
TITLE	MAIN CHARACTER	MAIN POINTS	THEMES
The Net	The Net (fishermen), good fish, bad fish	<p>1 - God is active; using the net, to judge all mankind at the end of the age.</p> <p>2 - The good fish represent believers, who will continue God's work in heaven.</p> <p>3 - The bad fish represent unbelievers; who will be eternally separated from God in hell.</p>	End of the Age (Judgment Day); believers; unbelievers; heaven; hell; God's judgment.
The Rich Man and Lazarus	Abraham, Lazarus, rich man	1 - Like Lazarus, those God redeems, will enter God's presence in heaven.	Repentant people; unrepentant people; reality

		<p>2 - Like the rich man, unrepentant people will experience eternal punishment (hell)</p> <p>3 - God discloses Himself through Abraham, Moses, the prophets and here through Christ - to ensure nobody who does not do God's will - can challenge their fate before God.</p>	<p>of heaven; reality of hell; God's judgment; the resurrection; Christ's resurrection.</p>
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#### CHART C - (Page 5)

#### PARABLES OF JESUS

TITLE	MAIN CHARACTER	MAIN POINTS	THEMES
The Watchful Servants	Master (man going on journey), watchful servants, servants who are not watchful.	<p>1 - Master stands for God (Jesus Christ) who can return at any time.</p> <p>2 - The watchful servants stand for those who are ready and prepared for Christ's return.</p> <p>3 - Those servants who are not watchful, stand for those unprepared for Christ's return.</p>	<p>Christ's Return; Judgment Day; readiness; those not alert; ONLY God knows the time of Christ's return; expectation and anticipation of Christ's return; God's kingdom will come to pass (heaven).</p>
The Talents (Minas)	Master, good servant (i.e. "the	1 - God gives all people some of His resources	The Second Coming; good

	first two servants"), evil servant.	<p>to be good servants, like the master.</p> <p>2 - Those who do God's will (believers) will be rewarded, like the first two servants (good servants).</p> <p>3 - Those who do not do God's will (unbelievers) will be punished and eternally separated from God (in hell), like the evil servant.</p>	stewardship; bad stewardship; heaven; hell; eternal rewards; eternal punishment; God's sovereignty; God is just; believers; unbelievers; using spiritual gifts; not using spiritual gifts; good servants (with a heart bent towards God); evil servants (with a heart not bent towards God)
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#### CHART C - (Page 6)

#### PARABLES OF JESUS

TITLE	MAIN CHARACTER	MAIN POINTS	THEMES
The Vineyard Workers	Master, eleventh-hour laborers, rest of laborers.	<p>1 - All of God's people will be dealt with fairly (as seen in the first group of laborers).</p> <p>2 - God is sovereign in His free grace, and decides who will receive what (as seen in the last hired laborers).</p> <p>3 - All believers are equal from God's viewpoint, based on how He groups people together here.</p>	God's grace; God's generosity; God shows no favouritism; obedience; gratitude; How God sees and rewards the work of believers; Christians are not to compare themselves with other Christians.

The Sower and the Soils	The Sower, fruitful seed, unfruitful seed (seed on path, seed among rocks, seed among thorns)	<p>1 - God shares his word with all kinds of people, like the Sower.</p> <p>2 - Similar to the three types of soil (unfruitful), people will show three kinds of (unregenerate) response: First, no response at all, due to an evil heart; second, a superficial response that only appears genuine; third, a temporary interest in the gospel that disappears, due to the unexpectedly high cost of discipleship.</p> <p>3 - Believers, that is regenerate people, like the fruitful soil, are those who respond to God's Word with obedience and persevere, revealing a heart bent toward God.</p>	God's call; Satan's work; the Gospel ('Good News'); regenerate people; unregenerate people; call to persevere; believers; unbelievers; evil hearts; hearts bent towards Christ.
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#### CHART C - (Page 7)

#### PARABLES OF JESUS

TITLE	MAIN CHARACTERS	MAIN POINTS	THEMES
The Good Samaritan	Samaritan, man in ditch, priest/Levite.	<p>1 - The behaviour of the priest and Levite reveals a religious appearance (legalism), but not a soft and loving heart.</p> <p>2 - The behaviour of the Samaritan reveals a heart of compassion, that looks out for others in need, regardless of ethnicity</p>	Legalism; heartless religiosity; compassion; following Jesus requires a change of heart; Jesus breaks all social conventions; loving one's

		<p>or social differences.</p> <p>3 - The man in the ditch represents anyone in need and shows that even a perceived 'enemy' is one's neighbor.</p>	<p>neighbor is a matter of heart; God's love (agape) is directed towards all people.</p>
The Great Banquet	Banquet giver, replacement guests, those invited who refuse to come.	<p>1 - God is simultaneously gracious and sincere, extending His invitation for all people to join the banquet He gives - yet, at the end of the age, He will judge and punish all those who refuse to come (to Christ).</p> <p>2 - As we learn from those who refuse to come, there is no valid excuse.</p> <p>3 - As we learn from the replacement guests, God's generosity extends all social boundaries and includes those on the fringe of society.</p>	<p>God's grace; judgment day; believers; unbelievers; following Jesus versus following the world; God calls outcasts; Jesus' love and call has no limits - for those who do follow Him (all that matters is that people come).</p>

#### CHART C - (Page 8)

#### PARABLES OF JESUS

TITLE	MAIN CHARACTERS	MAIN POINTS	THEMES
The Unforgiving Servant	King, first servant (unforgiving), fellow servant	1 - As the king forgives the first servant, we are reminded that God's grace in forgiving sins is boundless.	God's boundless grace; forgiveness; unforgiveness

		<p>2 - As the first servant is unforgiving toward his fellow servant, we are reminded that not forgiving others is an act of evil.</p> <p>3 - As the first (unforgiving) servant finds out, there is a terrible fate for the unforgiving.</p>	<p>; forgiving others is a <i>must</i> not an option; Jesus' forgiveness is the standard</p> <p>believers are to imitate (see 'The Lord's Prayer' in Matthew 6:9-15; Luke 11:1-4) and remember Jesus' words while dying on the cross "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34)</p>
The Shrewd Manager ('Unjust Steward')	Master, steward ('shrewd manager'), debtors	<p>1 - All believers will have to give an account to Christ, on how they served Him.</p> <p>2 - To prepare for that event, all believers are called to be shrewd in their use of resources (time, energy, finances, etc.)</p> <p>3 - The reward for being shrewd - as an expression of true discipleship - is joy and spending eternity with Jesus.</p>	<p>God provides for us, that we may do His work;</p> <p>Judgment Day;</p> <p>accountability as a Christian;</p> <p>prudent (shrewd) use of resources;</p> <p>avoiding resources to become an idol; our true riches are in heaven;</p> <p>looking after others in need;</p>

			especially fellow believers.
<b>CHART C - (Page 9)</b>			
<b>PARABLES OF JESUS</b>			
TITLE	MAIN CHARACTERS	MAIN POINTS	THEMES
The Wicked Tenants	Landlord, new tenants, original tenants, son	<p>1 - God is patient towards his people to produce fruit, despite their hostility and rebellion towards Him.</p> <p>2 - Those who have rejected God will be eternally separated on the day when God's patience runs out.</p> <p>3 - God will accomplish His Sovereign goals through new and true followers, who will produce the fruit, the others failed to accomplish.</p>	God is patient, but his patience does run out; God's people are those who do His work; God's sovereignty; believers; unbelievers; Judgment day; obedience; disobedience.
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector	The Pharisee, the tax collector	<p>1 - Those who exalt themselves will be humbled.</p> <p>2 - Those who humble themselves will be exalted.</p>	Humility; legalism; final judgment; forgiveness; unforgiveness ; repentance; unrepentant.
The House on the Rock (Wise and Foolish Builders)	Wise builders, foolish builders.	<p>1 - An obedient response to the gospel leads to eternal salvation on Judgment day.</p> <p>2 - A refusal to repent</p>	Judgment Day; gospel; following Christ; rejecting Christ;

		and follow Christ leads to eternal damnation (hell) on Judgment Day.	heaven; hell; eternal salvation; eternal damnation; repentance; unrepentance; believers; unbelievers.
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**CHART C - (Page 10)**

**PARABLES OF JESUS**

TITLE	MAIN CHARACTERS	MAIN POINTS	THEMES
The Unworthy Servant	Master, servant.	1 - God is sovereign in how He commands His followers to live in their circumstances. 2 - Believers must never assume that their obedience earns them His favor.	God's sovereignty; obedience; disobedience; believers must acknowledge their unworthiness before God; God's grace; God's grace cannot be earned.
The Seed Growing Secretly	Farmer, seed.	1 - God's kingdom always grows - at times, almost invisibly. 2 - God's kingdom reaches its full growth at the end of the age, immediately followed by Judgment Day.	Judgment Day; Believers are to wait patiently, expectantly and productively for Christ's Return; people are not able to control or predict God's kingdom growth; God's sovereignty; believers are

			to keep focused on the cross, not the world.
The Rich Fool	God, the rich man.	1 - A true disciple of Jesus does not accumulate wealth for selfish purposes. 2 - A true disciple is aware that earthly riches are temporal, yet heavenly riches are eternal.	True disciples; false disciples; idolatry; greed; generosity; a heart bent towards God; a heart turned away from God (those who ignore God).

**CHART C - (Page 11)**

**PARABLES OF JESUS**

TITLE	MAIN CHARACTER	MAIN POINTS	THEMES
The Unfruitful Fig Tree	Master, fig tree/vinedresser.	1 - Judgment is imminent on Israel's leadership (tree to be cut down) 2 - God extends His mercy for a little while longer, in the hope that the leaders will respond to Him properly (tree to be nurtured one more year).	God's mercy; God's grace; God's judgment; vineyard (as metaphor for Israel); repentance; unrepentance; heaven; hell.
The Persistent Widow ('Unjust Judge')	Judge, widow.	1 - While the timing remains unknown, God will send the Son of Man (Jesus) back to earth, in response to the cries of his people facing temporary injustice. 2 - Thus, as believers we are called to	Need for prayer; persistence; injustice; justice; pray without ceasing; faith; Christ's return; persevering

		persevere in faithful prayer for the consummation of God's kingdom.	through persecution and trials.
The Friend at Midnight	Man sleeping, friend in need of bread.	1 - Man at door teaches us as believers to be bold in our prayers before God, telling Him exactly what we need. 2 - Man awakened from sleep teaches us that God will provide for His children with overflowing generosity and willingness.	Pray without ceasing; God provides generously for the needs of His children; God rewards those who earnestly seek Him out.

**CHART C - (Page 12)**

**PARABLES OF JESUS**

TITLE	MAIN CHARACTER	MAIN POINTS	THEMES
The Hidden Treasure/The Valuable Pearl	Man, hidden treasure/Man, valuable pearl.	1 - God's kingdom is worth sacrificing everything for it, because of its unmatched value (Jesus compares God's kingdom to the treasure and the pearl).	God's kingdom; the unmatchable value of God's kingdom; sacrifice; Jesus is calling all people to Himself (commanding they let go of anything that might stand in the way of this priceless relationship).
The Cost of	A tower builder;	1 - People must count	Discipleship is

Discipleship	a king considering war.	the cost of following Christ (understand the cost of discipleship).	costly; following Jesus comes at a price; believers have to join in the suffering of the Messiah (i.e. being persecuted, etc.)
The Mustard Seed/The Yeast	Mustard seed/yeast	1 - While initially seeming insignificant, God's kingdom will grow significantly.	God's kingdom coming in full glory; God uses insignificant things to shame the world; people cannot fathom God's growing kingdom.

**CHART C - (Page 13)**

**PARABLES OF JESUS**

TITLE	MAIN CHARACTER	MAIN POINTS	THEMES
The Sheep and the Goats	King (Jesus as "Son of Man"), Sheep, Goats	<p>1 - At the end of the age, Jesus will judge all people.</p> <p>2 - Believers characterized by mercy and a heart bent towards Jesus, will live eternally in heaven with Christ.</p> <p>3 - Unbelievers will be eternally separated from Jesus, cast into hell.</p>	Christ is eternal Judge; believer; unbeliever; heaven; hell; Judgment day.

The Homeowner	Homeowner	1 - Understanding God's Word and following Jesus are what characterise a Christian.	Believers; unbelievers; discipleship; following Jesus; understanding God's Word (the Bible) is what a disciple of Christ aims for (and to help others understand and apply God's Word).
The Patches	Patch from new garment, old garment.	1 - There is a distinction between the new (i.e. God's kingdom inaugurated by Jesus) and the old (i.e. Pharisee Judaism) which is a call to fully let go of the old ways and fully embrace Christ.	Commitment to Jesus means letting go of past ways (old ways) of doing things; Christ calls for complete surrender to Him.
<b>CHART C - (Page 14)</b>			
<b>PARABLES OF JESUS</b>			
TITLE	MAIN CHARACTER	MAIN POINTS	THEMES
The Wine and the Wineskins	New wine, old wineskins, new wineskins.	1 - Jesus' calling is so radical and new, that there is no room for doing things the old way!	Jesus calls us as believers to a radical new relationship with Himself, unlike any

			other. Christians are 'born again' (see John 3:3-7), i.e. 'the old has passed, the new has come.'
The Lesson of the Lamp	Lamp, lampstand.	1 - While hidden to some people, Christ will be revealed to all at His Second Coming.	Believers embrace Christ as 'Lord of Lords' and 'King of Kings' and are looking forward to His glorious return.
The Lesson of the Fig Tree	Fig tree.	1 - Christians are to be prepared for Jesus' return, and remain prepared.	Jesus' Return (Parousia), i.e. The Second Coming. Only God knows when Christ will return, believers are to keep watchful and vigilant.

Charts derived and adapted from Blomberg, Craig L. *Interpreting the Parables*. 2nd ed., rev. and expanded ed. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012.

## The Parables of Jesus

### The Lesson of the Lamp

Mark 4:21-22

21 Jesus also said to them, “Does anyone bring in a lamp to put it under a basket or under a bed? Doesn’t he set it on a stand? 22 For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be brought to light.”

### The House on the Rock (Wise and Foolish Builders)

Matthew 7:24-27

24 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain fell, the torrents raged, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because its foundation was on the rock.

26 But everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain fell, the torrents raged, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its collapse!”

### The Patches

Luke 5:36

36 He also told them a parable: “No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will tear the new garment as well, and the patch from the new will not match the old.”

### The Wine and the Wineskins

Luke 5:37-38

37 “And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will spill, and the wineskins will be ruined.

38 Instead, new wine is poured into new wineskins. 39 And no one after drinking old wine wants new, for he says, ‘The old is better.’ ”

## The Sower and the Soils

Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23

3 And He told them many things in parables, saying, “A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 And as he was sowing, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.

5 Some fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun rose, the seedlings were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the seedlings.

8 Still other seed fell on good soil and produced a crop—a hundredfold, sixtyfold, or thirtyfold.”

## The Sower and the Soils (explained)

Matthew 13:18-23

18 “Consider, then, the parable of the sower: 19 When anyone hears the message of the kingdom but does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.

20 The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since he has no root, he remains for only a season. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.

22 The seed sown among the thorns is the one who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

23 But the seed sown on good soil is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and produces a crop—a hundredfold, sixtyfold, or thirtyfold.”

## The Wheat and the Weeds

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

24 Jesus put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 But while everyone was asleep, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and slipped away.

26 When the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the weeds also appeared.

27 The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

28 ‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

So the servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

29 ‘No,’ he said, ‘if you pull the weeds now, you might uproot the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat into my barn.’”

### The Wheat and the Weeds (explained)

Matthew 13:36-43

36 Then Jesus dismissed the crowds and went into the house. His disciples came to Him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.” 37 He replied, “The One who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, and the good seed represents the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. 40 As the weeds are collected and burned in the fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will weed out of His kingdom every cause of sin and all who practice lawlessness. 42 And they will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.  
He who has ears, let him hear.”

### The Mustard Seed

Matthew 13:31-32

31 He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a man planted in his field. 32 Although it is the smallest of all seeds, yet it grows into the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.”

### The Yeast

Matthew 13:33

33 He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and mixed into three measures of flour, until all of it was leavened.”

### The Hidden Treasure

Matthew 13:44

44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and in his joy he went and sold all he had and bought that field."

The Valuable Pearl  
Matthew 13:45-46

45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls.  
46 When he found one very precious pearl, he went away and sold all he had and bought it."

The Net  
Matthew 13:47-50

47 "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was cast into the sea and caught all kinds of fish. 48 When it was full, the men pulled it ashore. Then they sat down and sorted the good fish into containers, but threw the bad away.

49 So will it be at the end of the age: The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous, 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The Homeowner  
Matthew 13:52

52 Then He told them, "For this reason, every scribe who has been discipled in the kingdom of heaven is like a homeowner who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."

The Lost Sheep  
Luke 15:3-7

3 Then Jesus told them this parable: 4 "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the pasture and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? 5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders, 6 comes home, and calls together his friends and neighbors to tell them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep!' 7 In the same way, I tell you that there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous ones who do not need to repent."

The Unforgiving Servant  
Matthew 18:23-35

23 "Because of this, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlements, a debtor was brought to him owing ten thousand talents. 25 Since the man was unable to pay, the master ordered that he be sold to pay his debt, along with his wife and children and everything he owned.

26 Then the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Have patience with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.'

27 His master had compassion on him, forgave his debt, and released him.

28 But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe me!'

29 So his fellow servant fell down and begged him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you back.'

30 But he refused. Instead, he went and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay his debt.

31 When his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and recounted all of this to their master.

32 Then the master summoned him and declared, 'You wicked servant! I forgave all your debt because you begged me. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had on you?' 34 In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should repay all that he owed. 35 That is how My heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

### The Vineyard Workers

Matthew 20:1-16

1 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. 2 He agreed to pay them a denarius a for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

3 About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. 4 'You also go into my vineyard,' he said, 'and I will pay you whatever is right.' 5 So they went.

He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing.

6 About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' he asked.

7 'Because no one has hired us,' they answered. So he told them, 'You also go into my vineyard.'

8 When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with the last ones hired and moving on to the first.'

9 The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. 10 So when the original workers came, they assumed they would receive more. But each of them also received a denarius.

11 On receiving their pay, they began to grumble against the landowner. 12 ‘These men who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day.’

13 But he answered one of them, ‘Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Did you not agree with me on one denarius? 14 Take your pay and go. I want to give this last man the same as I gave you. 15 Do I not have the right to do as I please with what is mine? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

16 So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

### The Two Sons

Matthew 21:28-32

28 “But what do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first one and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’

29 ‘I will not,’ he replied. But later he changed his mind and went.

30 Then the man went to the second son and told him the same thing.

‘I will, sir,’ he said. But he did not go.

31 Which of the two did the will of his father?”

“The first,” they answered.

Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you. 32 For John came to you in a righteous way and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.”

### The Wicked Tenants

Matthew 21:33-44

33 “Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a tower. Then he rented it out to some tenants and went away on a journey.

34 When the harvest time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his share of the fruit. 35 But the tenants seized his servants. They beat one, killed another, and stoned a third.

36 Again, he sent other servants, more than the first group. But the tenants did the same to them.

37 Finally, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said.

38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and take his inheritance.’ 39 So they seized him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

40 Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard returns, what will he do to those tenants?’

41 “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied, “and will rent out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him his share of the fruit at harvest time.”

42 Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

‘The stone the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone.

This is from the Lord,

and it is marvelous in our eyes’?

43 Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. 44 He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.”

### The Wedding Banquet

Matthew 22:2-14

2 “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. 3 He sent his servants to call those he had invited to the banquet, but they refused to come.

4 Again, he sent other servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner. My oxen and fattened cattle have been killed, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’

5 But they paid no attention and went away, one to his field, another to his business.

6 The rest seized his servants, mistreated them, and killed them.

7 The king was enraged, and he sent his troops to destroy those murderers and burn their city. 8 Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore to the crossroads and invite to the banquet as many as you can find.’

10 So the servants went out into the streets and gathered everyone they could find, both evil and good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

11 But when the king came in to see the guests, he spotted a man who was not dressed in wedding clothes. 12 ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’

But the man was speechless.

13 Then the king told the servants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’  
14 For many are called, but few are chosen.”

The Lessons of the Fig Tree  
Matthew 24:32-35

32 “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its branches become tender and sprout leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 So also, when you see all these things, you will know that He is near, right at the door. 34 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.”

The Faithful and the Wise Servant  
Matthew 24:45-51

45 “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of his household, to give the others their food at the proper time? 46 Blessed is that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. 47 Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 48 But suppose that servant is wicked and says in his heart, ‘My master will be away a long time.’ 49 And he begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. 50 The master of that servant will come on a day he does not expect and at an hour he does not anticipate. 51 Then he will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

The Ten Virgins  
Matthew 25:1-13

1 “At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3 The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take along any extra oil. 4 But the wise ones took oil in flasks along with their lamps. 5 When the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. 6 At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ 7 Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’ 9 ‘No,’ said the wise ones, ‘or there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’

10 But while they were on their way to buy it, the bridegroom arrived. Those who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet, and the door was shut.

11 Later the other virgins arrived and said, ‘Lord, lord, open the door for us!’

12 But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’

13 Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.”

### The Talents (Minas)

Matthew 25:14-30

14 “For it is just like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted them with his possessions. 15 To one he gave five talents, to another two talents, and to another one talent—each according to his own ability. And he went on his journey.

16 The servant who had received the five talents went at once and put them to work and gained five more. 17 Likewise, the one with the two talents gained two more. 18 But the servant who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master’s money.

19 After a long time the master of those servants returned to settle accounts with them. 20 The servant who had received the five talents came and presented five more. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’

21 His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master!’

22 The servant who had received the two talents also came and said, ‘Master, you entrusted me with two talents. See, I have gained two more.’

23 His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master!’

24 Finally, the servant who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Master, I knew that you are a hard man, reaping where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what belongs to you.’

26 ‘You wicked, lazy servant!’ replied his master. ‘You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed. 27 Then you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received it back with interest.

28 Therefore take the talent from him and give it to the one who has ten talents. 29 For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. But the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. 30 And throw that worthless servant into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

## The Sheep and the Goats

Matthew 25:31-46

31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will place the sheep on His right and the goats on His left.

34 Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, 36 I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you visited Me.'

37 Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 When did we see You sick or in prison and visit You?'

40 And the King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.'

41 Then He will say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, I was naked and you did not clothe Me, I was sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

44 And they too will reply, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'

45 Then the King will answer, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me.'

46 And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

## The Seed Growing Secretly

Mark 4:26-29

26 Jesus also said, "The kingdom of God is like a man who scatters seed on the ground. 27 Night and day he sleeps and wakes, and the seed sprouts and grows, though he knows not how. 28 All by itself the earth produces a crop—

first the stalk, then the head, then grain that ripens within. 29 And as soon as the grain is ripe, he swings the sickle, because the harvest has come."

### The Watchful Servants

Mark 13:35-37

35 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know when the master of the house will return—whether in the evening, at midnight, when the rooster crows, or in the morning. 36 Otherwise, he may arrive without notice and find you sleeping. 37 And what I say to you, I say to everyone: Keep watch!"

### The Money Lender

Luke 7:41-43

41 "Two men were debtors to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 When they were unable to repay him, he forgave both of them. Which one, then, will love him more?"

43 "I suppose the one who was forgiven more," Simon replied.  
"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

### The Good Samaritan

Luke 10:30-37

30 Jesus took up this question and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.

31 Now by chance a priest was going down the same road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 So too, when a Levite came to that spot and saw him, he passed by on the other side.

33 But when a Samaritan on a journey came upon him, he looked at him and had compassion. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Take care of him,' he said, 'and on my return I will repay you for any additional expense.'

36 Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

37 "The one who showed him mercy," replied the expert in the law.  
Then Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

### The Friend at Midnight

Luke 11:5-8

5 Then Jesus said to them, “Suppose one of you goes to his friend at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, 6 because a friend of mine has come to me on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him.’ 7 And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Do not bother me. My door is already shut, and my children and I are in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything.’ 8 I tell you, even though he will not get up to provide for him because of his friendship, yet because of the man’s persistence, he will get up and give him as much as he needs.”

The Rich Fool

Luke 12:16-21

16 Then He told them a parable: “The ground of a certain rich man produced an abundance. 17 So he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, since I have nowhere to store my crops?’ 18 Then he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and will build bigger ones, and there I will store up all my grain and my goods. 19 Then I will say to myself, “You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take it easy. Eat, drink, and be merry!”’ 20 But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be required of you. Then who will own what you have accumulated?’ 21 This is how it will be for anyone who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich toward God.”

The Unfruitful Fig Tree

Luke 13:6-9

6 Then Jesus told this parable: “A man had a fig tree that was planted in his vineyard. He went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. 7 So he said to the keeper of the vineyard, ‘Look, for the past three years I have come to search for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Therefore cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’ 8 ‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone again this year, until I dig around it and fertilize it. 9 If it bears fruit next year, fine. But if not, you can cut it down.’”

The Guests at the Feast

Luke 14:7-14

7 When Jesus noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, He told them a parable: 8 "When you are invited to a wedding banquet, do not sit in the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited. 9 Then the host who invited both of you will come and tell you, 'Give this man your seat.' And in humiliation, you will have to take the last place. 10 But when you are invited, go and sit in the last place, so that your host will come and tell you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in front of everyone at the table with you. 11 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

12 Then Jesus said to the man who had invited Him, "When you host a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or brothers or relatives or rich neighbors. Otherwise, they may invite you in return, and you will be repaid. 13 But when you host a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Since they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

### The Great Banquet

Luke 14:16-24

16 But Jesus replied, "A certain man prepared a great banquet and invited many guests. 17 When it was time for the banquet, he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'

18 But one after another they all began to make excuses. The first one said, 'I have bought a field, and I need to go see it. Please excuse me.'

19 Another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out. Please excuse me.'

20 Still another said, 'I have married a wife, so I cannot come.'

21 The servant returned and reported all this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the city, and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.'

22 'Sir,' the servant replied, 'what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.'

23 So the master told his servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. 24 For I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will taste my banquet.' "

### The Cost of Discipleship

Luke 14:28-33

28 "Which of you, wishing to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost to see if he has the resources to complete it? 29 Otherwise, if he lays

the foundation and is unable to finish the work, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, 30 saying, ‘This man could not finish what he started to build.’ 31 Or what king on his way to war with another king will not first sit down and consider whether he can engage with ten thousand men the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 And if he is unable, he will send a delegation while the other king is still far off, to ask for terms of peace. 33 In the same way, any one of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be My disciple.”

### The Lost Coin Luke 15:8-10

8 “Or what woman who has ten silver coins and loses one of them does not light a lamp, sweep her house, and search carefully until she finds it? 9 And when she finds it, she calls together her friends and neighbors to say, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost coin.’ 10 In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of God’s angels over one sinner who repents.”

### The Lost Son Luke 15:11-32

11 Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger son said to him, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

13 After a few days, the younger son got everything together and journeyed to a distant country, where he squandered his wealth in wild living.

14 After he had spent all he had, a severe famine swept through that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. 16 He longed to fill his belly with the pods the pigs were eating, but no one would give him a thing.

17 Finally he came to his senses and said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have plenty of food? But here I am, starving to death! 18 I will get up and go back to my father and say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.”’

20 So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still in the distance, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.

21 The son declared, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened

calf and kill it. Let us feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again! He was lost and is found!' So they began to celebrate. 25 Meanwhile the older son was in the field, and as he approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked what was going on.

27 'Your brother has returned,' he said, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has him back safe and sound.'

28 The older son became angry and refused to go in. So his father came out and pleaded with him.

29 But he answered his father, 'Look, all these years I have served you and never disobeyed a commandment of yours. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours returns from squandering your wealth with prostitutes, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

31 'Son, you are always with me,' the father said, 'and all that is mine is yours. 32 But it was fitting to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' "

### The Shrewd Manager ('Unjust Steward')

Luke 16:1-8

1 Jesus also said to His disciples, "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. 2 So he called him in to ask, 'What is this I hear about you? Turn in an account of your management, for you cannot be manager any longer.'

3 The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do, now that my master is taking away my position? I am too weak to dig and too ashamed to beg. 4 I know what I will do, so that after my removal from management, people will welcome me into their homes.'

5 And he called in each one of his master's debtors. 'How much do you owe my master?' he asked the first.

6 'A hundred measures of olive oil,' he answered.

'Take your bill,' said the manager. 'Sit down quickly, and write fifty.'

7 Then he asked another, 'And how much do you owe?'

'A hundred measures of wheat,' he replied.

'Take your bill and write eighty,' he told him.

8 The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the sons of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the sons of light."

### The Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16:19-31

19 "Now there was a rich man dressed in purple and fine linen, who lived each day in joyous splendor. 20 And a beggar named Lazarus lay at his gate, covered with sores 21 and longing to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 One day the beggar died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. And the rich man also died and was buried. 23 In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham from afar, with Lazarus by his side.

24 So he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. For I am in agony in this fire.'

25 But Abraham answered, 'Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things. But now he is comforted here, while you are in agony. 26 And besides all this, a great chasm has been fixed between us and you, so that even those who wish cannot cross from here to you, nor can anyone cross from there to us.'

27 'Then I beg you, father,' he said, 'send Lazarus to my father's house, 28 for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also end up in this place of torment.'

29 But Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let your brothers listen to them.'

30 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone is sent to them from the dead, they will repent.'

31 Then Abraham said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.' "

### The Unworthy Servant

Luke 17:7-10

7 "Which of you whose servant comes in from plowing or shepherding in the field will say to him, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? 8 Instead, won't he tell him, 'Prepare my meal and dress yourself to serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink'? 9 Does he thank the servant because he did what he was told? 10 So you also, when you have done everything commanded of you, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.' "

### The Persistent Widow ('Unjust Judge')

Luke 18:2-8

2 "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected men. 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept appealing to him, 'Give me justice against my adversary.'

4 For a while he refused, but later he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect men, 5 yet because this widow keeps pestering me, I will give her justice. Then she will stop wearing me out with her perpetual requests.’ ”

6 And the Lord said, “Listen to the words of the unjust judge. 7 Will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry out to Him day and night? Will He continue to defer their help? 8 I tell you, He will promptly carry out justice on their behalf. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?”

### The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Luke 18:10-14

10 “Two men went up to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like the other men—swindlers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and pay tithes of all that I acquire.’

13 But the tax collector stood at a distance, unwilling even to lift up his eyes to heaven. Instead, he beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner!’ 14 I tell you, this man, rather than the Pharisee, went home justified. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

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May God bless you and keep you.

Pastor John

Amen.